

Friday 13th January 2012

Greetings from the Buffer Zone,

Today, following the controversial events of the past week, five United Nations officers came to our occupation between the Ledra\Lokmaci Street checkpoints and handed us notice that we have to "vacate the area immediately". We believe the allegations on this document do not reflect the truth and are out of context. Here is our response to the accusations on this unsigned yet alleged official notice.

While the UN had given us notice on the 25th November 2011 that we need 25 days in advance to hold an authorised event in the Buffer Zone, our presence in the Buffer Zone is clearly not a bicomunal event that requires authorization from the UN. Occupy the Buffer Zone is a citizen movement which stands against the borders and regulations that legitimise the division of the island. Our occupation claims back the Buffer Zone, a space that symbolises the issues we face on this island. Our efforts to revitalise the Dead Zone create a fertile environment for producing culture and education beyond "borders". Here, new bonds and friendships can *flourish between people who are otherwise segregated*. We believe the reasons we are here matter a lot more in terms of the welfare of this island than the regulations the United Nations claim we violate.

The movement responds to the UN's allegations as such:

1. The buildings and structures being renovated by the Nicosia Master Plan are clearly demarcated by construction coverings, adhering to construction safety regulations. The occupying movement itself is set beyond this space, and no interference takes place by the occupying movement during working hours.
2. The occupied space is filled with bins and recycling posts that are cleaned and emptied on a daily basis. The occupation has a strong stance for eco-friendliness, as shown by our recent workshop on self-sustainability.
3. Regarding noise, any complaints communicated directly to the occupation are taken seriously and responded to quickly. After being approached by the police regarding noise levels during our New Year's party, we immediately lowered the levels. Similar complaints have not been received since.
4. We have received no complaints over the smoke, verbal or written. Fire is only used during the late hours of the night, when the temperature drops and on several the passersby have joined the conversation's warmth.
5. There are no dogs in the occupation that can be defined as 'feral'. The dogs that do take refuge in the Buffer Zone are domesticated, with their health and dietary needs being taken care of. Our take on animal welfare is emphasised on their rights for liberation as sentient beings, ensuring that they do not endure avoidable pain and suffering. The UN's use of 'threat' for passersby does not reflect the friendly approach we take in calling our dogs back when necessary.
6. Occupying vacant buildings without authorization from UNFICYP, is a political act that enables the conduct of workshops, activities, discussions as well as housing a library for cultural and educational purposes.
7. In response to alleged set fires inside these buildings, the occupation has never set fire in them. Fire marks existing on the flooring in the larger space, were found, and not produced, by the occupation. The only sources of warmth in the space are gas heaters that have traditionally been utilised and are easily recognisable by the Cypriot community.

We believe that the points above comprise of valid and solid arguments that maintain and ensure the health and safety of all people and animals between the Ledra\Lokmaci checkpoints.

Additionally, we would like to point to the inconsistencies in the UN's allegations. Earlier in the week, the UN had notified us of them receiving complaints over a banner facing the north to show solidarity to Halil, a blogger-activist writing against torture in the army. When we refused to take it down, they proceeded to remove it themselves. However, in the case of claimed complaints the UN is currently presenting, we had never received prior warnings or notifications of any kind. This demonstrates an

inconsistency in the UN's professional manner, one we hoped would be maintained.

Despite statements by the UN Spokesperson in the press that the UN supports any kind of activity that promotes peace, UNFICYP has never shown any active support to the occupation. For example, they did not assist in returning our electricity generator from the Turkish Cypriot military, after numerous attempts of requesting aid. The night the generator was confiscated, the military was present in a supposedly demilitarised space in the Buffer Zone, which was emphatically illegal, before the arrival of UNFICYP. Since then, the military has patrolled this area. UNFICYP had allowed the confiscation of the generator by the military preventing its direct return to its rightful owner. This behaviour has limited the use of the activity centre for educational and cultural events.

In conclusion, we are being ordered to vacate the space on the basis of inconsistent and false accusations. The occupation has and will continue to promote peace and the reunification of Cyprus, and calls for support and solidarity from all communities living on the island and beyond.

Please join us in the Ledra\Lokmaci Buffer Zone to support our movement and its cause.

For further information, please contact us on media@occupybufferzone.info and www.occupybufferzone.info

Occupy the Buffer Zone - 15th October Movement
Media Team